



Plus One Defense Systems

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Connecticut General Assembly
Public Safety and Security Committee
Legislative Office Building, Room 3600
Hartford, CT 06106

**RE: Prepared Testimony in Support of HB 5277
An Act Legalizing and Regulating Mixed Martial Arts**

Honorable Members of the Public Safety and Security Committee:

I would like to thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony to you to discuss HB 5277, An Act Legalizing and Regulating Mixed Martial Arts. I would especially like to thank Co-Chairs Senator Hartley and Representative Dargan, Vice Chairs Ayala and Verrengia and Ranking Members Guglielmo and Giegler for their interest in this important piece of legislation.

By way of some background, my name is Darin Reisler. I own and operate Plus One Defense Systems, Inc. in West Hartford, Connecticut. I am a former police officer and have also worked as the Executive Director of the Community Anti-Drug Coalition of Hampden County. I have been involved as a member on the steering committee for the Partners In Prevention, a group initiated by the Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association; I was the faculty advisor for Tunxis Community College's Christian Club, I have held the position of Vice-President with MADD Massachusetts (Mothers Against Drunk Driving), and I am a former member of the Hampden County District Attorney's Task Force On Domestic Violence. I am also a licensed and experienced social worker.

Why do I think Connecticut needs to legalize and regulate the growing sport of mixed martial arts? The sport is growing and is very important for children and adults.

I have seen first-hand how the training that young people get from this sport helps them with discipline, self-esteem, and positive self-awareness. In fact, my school currently receives referrals from the Department of Children and Families. We have received a number of referrals via the Department when their social workers believe that our services can help at-risk young people. Why does this occur? This occurs because our programming is proven to build stronger character in young people. I do mean proven. I have had some of our programming independently evaluated by the UMASS Donahue Institute, and we have a proven record of aiding in child development and building character traits such as respect, responsibility, and kindness. After ten years of service in Connecticut (eight of them in West Hartford) we are continually referred students by non-profit organizations, physicians, and therapists. I have seen how this sport is a benefit to the community as a whole.

My adult students include many people from all walks of life. We have police officers, lawyers, doctors, insurance agents, accountants, computer programmers, construction workers, and government employees, amongst others who come to us for training. We provide these students with a very fun way of becoming healthier, happier, and safer.

We hold community events, and we donate 10% of all of our profits back to our local and global community. The legalization of this sport will bring needed revenue to the state, and regulation will ensure that safety is exercised when there are any sanctioned matches that are held. As of now, we need to go out-of-state in order to pursue sanctioned competition. This is taking a lot of money away from our State and local businesses.

Counting myself, we now support three full-time staff members and 10 part-time staff members. Full-time staff at my school have medical and dental benefits available, as well as paid sick days and two weeks paid vacation each year. One of my full-time staff members is a Dartmouth graduate, the other is a Navy veteran.

We started with one student on an outdoor basketball court, and we now have approximately 400 members. We are growing. Should you decide to pass this bill, we would be empowered to bring about a greater level of the programming to Connecticut than we already provide. We would bring new jobs to Connecticut, and we would be better able to help Connecticut residents live healthier, happier, safer lives. We would be better able to provide services to the children of Connecticut. We would be better able to help build tomorrow's generation of Connecticut residents with a mentality of social responsibility, kindness, and understanding.

I urge you to pass HB 5277. Thank you for your consideration.

With Peace,
Darin

Darin Reislér
Owner/Head Instructor
Plus One Defense Systems